

make your point a little more clear. Would you tell the members of the committee what were the recommendation and findings of the Coroner's inquest in the case you referred to?

Mr. COWAN: Mr. Chairman, you are not taking part in the discussion, are you?

Mr. KNOWLES: May I ask a question, Mr. Chairman? The question I put to the witness is the question that the Chairman put.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. WAHN: The jury found that the woman died from an air embolism that was self inflicted in an attempt to perform an abortion on herself. The jury stated that the law in Canada as it stands at the present time relating to contraceptives, and indeed to abortions, is barbaric and extremely primitive to say the least. In other words, there has been in effect a recommendation by a Coroner's jury that this particular section should be repealed.

Mr. COWAN: Mr. Chairman, the witness has now stated that nobody wants to see the present law enforced. Has he interviewed everybody in the Dominion of Canada to be able to make the statement? How does he know nobody wants it enforced? I am one who wants it enforced, and I know there are millions more. I am as certain there are millions more who want it enforced as he is that nobody wants it enforced. How does he know that there were 100,000 illegal abortions in Canada? What does he base those figures on? On Monday night of this week a member of Parliament produced figures in my presence showing that there were 64 escapees from penitentiaries in Canada, according to the penitentiary annual report. The hon. Frank McGee challenged the accuracy of the figure of 64. If Frank McGee will challenge the figure 64 escapees in Canada, then I challenge the figure of 100,000 illegal abortions. What is it based on?

Mr. WAHN: That is a fair question, Mr. Chairman. The figure I used was taken from statistics compiled by the Family Planning Association.

Mr. COWAN: I would like to know the basis of the figure.

Mr. WAHN: The basis for their statistics? Admittedly, it is difficult if not almost impossible to determine with any exactness the number of illegal abortions. For one thing it is impossible to determine with accuracy when abortion is illegal or not.

Mr. COWAN: I know that and that is why I asked you how you arrived at that figure.

Mr. ENNS: I do not think it is too useful to establish any exact figure, with due respect to Mr. Cowan. Perhaps if we simply say that there is a growing body of opinion on this subject, I do not think Mr. Cowan would challenge that statement. Whether or not it is correct, it is up to him to say, but I want to reflect this kind of growing opinion in our nation and something needs to be done.

● (11:40 a.m.)

Mr. COWAN: Something needs to be done! More exercise of self control is something that might be done.

Mr. ENNS: You are talking about human behavior. That is something we cannot legislate.